Reconstruction in Oktibbeha County

BY F. Z. BROWNE

Reprinted from the PUBLICATIONS OF THE MISSISSIPPI HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Vol. XIII.

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RECONSTRUCTION IN OKTIBBEHA COUNTY.

BY F. Z. BROWNE.[1]

As the courthouse in Oktibbeha county was destroyed by fire with most of the public records in 1875 the material for this paper has of necessity been wholly drawn from the testimony of participants and eye-witnesses.

From the time of the surrender of the civil government of Mississippi on May 22 until June 13, 1865, when provisional Governor Sharkey, who had been appointed by the president in his official capacity as commander-in-chief of the army, took charge, the administration of civil affairs in Mississippi was entirely under the supervision of the military authorities.

A large portion of the army of occupation still being in the State it was thought expedient by those in authority that companies of cavalry or infantry should be stationed at strategic points. In accordance with this policy a company of cavalry commanded by Captain Graves was quartered in 1865 in the main street of Starkville, the county seat of Oktibbeha county. Martial law was at once established, and Captain Graves' word was law. As a species of retributive

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[1] Fred Zollicoffer Browne was born at Kosciusko, Mississippi, December 27, 1878. He is the eldest son of Dr. J. A. and Mary Elizabeth Browne.

On his father's side he comes of the German Lutheran and Scotch-Irish Presbyterian stock of North and South Carolina. His paternal grandfather, George Henry Browne, who was a graduate of Newberry College, South Carolina, came with his wife, Margaret McClintock, to Mississippi before the War of Secession, and was the first organizer of the Lutheran Church in the State.

Through his mother, Elizabeth Jackson Browne, Mr. Browne is related to some of the best known families of Mississippi and Tennessee. Sam. A. Jackson of Kosciusko, Mississippi, widely and favorably known throughout the State, was his uncle.

His maternal grandmother was Susan A. Zollicoffer, a niece of General Felix Kirk Zollicoffer of Tennessee.

Mr. Browne is a graduate of the University of Mississippi and of Princeton Theological Seminary. He has also received the M.A. degree from Princeton University. November 29, 1911, he married Miss Susie Walton McBee of Lexington, Mississippi. He is now pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Starkville, Mississippi.—EDITOR.

By transfer
The White House
[illegible] 1913

justice for real or fancied wrongs committed upon the colored race, white men were arrested and fined upon the slightest pretexts. The only way of relief from the intolerable situation was found in the fact that with Graves and his soldiers the jingle of the guinea in the hand of the white man was found to be a most efficacious salve for the hurt that honor feels. Graves was so absolutely venal that like the Romans in the time of Jugurtha he would have sold himself if he could have found a purchaser.

The first authenticated case of rape by a negro on a white woman in Oktibbeha county occurred while Graves held sway in Starkville. The negro was arrested and brought to town and released by Graves upon payment of $100 in gold. Upon the payment of $100 more by the grandfather of the outraged girl Graves permitted the released negro to be run to death by hounds.

To the great relief of all, the Graves' régime was short. He was transferred elsewhere in 1865 and Captain Foster took his place. Captain Foster discharged well and faithfully the duties of his trying and difficult position. In the hour of their humiliation he showed a genuine respect and consideration for those who had shown themselves to be foemen worthy of his steel. He won the respect of all with whom he came in contact.

With the occupation of the town by Federal troops a branch of the freedmen's bureau was established in Starkville. C. A. Sullivan, a native son of Oktibbeha county, called in derision a scalawag, was its first head. He was a lawyer of some ability, and had been a Confederate soldier. Like all renegades, he was most zealous in showing his devotion to the cause of his erstwhile enemies. His influence on the negroes and on political conditions in general was very bad. Knowing that he was most cordially hated he went armed all the time.[2]

W. S. James, the sheriff of Oktibbeha county under the Confederate régime, having died about the time of the inauguration of martial law, Crockett Sullivan was appointed sheriff and tax collector. He was, if possible, a worse character than his brother. By him the plundering of the county under a form of law was begun. He collected taxes levied at exorbitant rates, never making any settlements, and finally decamped to Alabama.

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[2]These facts were obtained from conversations with Prof. Rhett Maxwell.

In the fall of 1866, H. C. Powers, one of the most interesting of the characters of the period, came to Oktibbeha county from Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Powers was a cousin of Governor R. C. Powers and was a man of culture, ability, and business experience. Mr. Powers began his career in Mississippi, not as a carpetbagger, but as a planter of means. Having failed at planting he went into politics and became the most influential leader of the Republicans in the county. Though placed in a difficult situation as the dispenser of Republican patronage in the county and often reviled and misunderstood, Mr. Powers throughout this stormy period was always the friend of the white man and an advocate of good government. This was shown by the fact that through his advice and influence Colonel Muldrow,[3] a man of marked ability, afterwards grand cyclop of the local Ku Klux Klan and congressman for years from the Oktibbeha district, was elected a member of the State legislature along with Ben Chiles, an ignorant colored man, at a time when there were eight hundred more negroes than white men registered in Oktibbeha county.

As Muldrow voted so voted Ben Chiles. Whenever a vote was called for or an opinion asked, Ben would say "I must see my friend Colonel Muldrow." It was well for Oktibbeha county and the State that Muldrow was there and that he was consulted. After the defalcation of Crockett Sullivan in 1867, Powers was appointed sheriff by Governor Ames. In 1868 he was elected on the Republican ticket to this office in the regular election over Henry McCright and J. W. James. He was an honest and capable officer. His task was a very difficult one, for he was hated by many because of the fact that he was a Northern Republican and had been elected by the negro vote. Then, too, the negroes, grossly ignorant, and inordinately puffed up in this year of jubilee of their new found freedom, were exceedingly hard to control. Through their loyal leagues and other organizations they began to demand a share for themselves in the State and county government. The Republican leaders generally were soon almost in the position of him who was "Hoist with his own petard."

At one time when the negroes were organizing and marching to and fro over the county to the various voting places the white men, grown desperate, went to Powers and told him that they would kill him if

[3]A sketch of Col. H. L. Muldrow by Hon. Geo. J. Leftwich will be found in the *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, X, 269–279.—EDITOR.

he did not put a check on such conduct. Powers professed himself a friend of the white man's government and promised to do what he could. The feeling against him was so bitter after his reëlection as sheriff over the Democratic candidates that an effort was made by the desperate and disgruntled element to prevent his making bond. When his bond was made by some of the most prominent Democrats of the county who knew his real character and worth, a further effort was made to have him impeached and thrown out of office for dishonesty. In answer to this charge Powers said, "Gentlemen, have an expert to examine my books and I will pay all expenses." The investigation was made and the books were found absolutely correct. The State afterwards refunded to Powers the amount paid out by him for the investigation.

After a time even the most headstrong and impulsive element in the Democratic party came to understand Powers better. As will be seen later, it was an open secret that it was his influence more than that of any one else with those high in authority in the Federal government that saved the leaders of the Ku Klux Klan in Oktibbeha county from serving a term in the Federal prison at Albany.

Powers accepted without reservation that famous political maxim that to the victors belong the spoils. Along with one Loomis, who also hailed from Cleveland, Ohio, he secured the contract for building the Artesia to Starkville spur of the Mobile and Ohio railroad. The work was done with convict labor, which was secured from the legislature through political influence. The county Republican organization, which was at this time in the heyday of its power, voted bonds and collected heavy taxes galore. Loomis amassed a fortune as a contractor and went back North. His operations covered a wide range of territory in the State. At one time he had an office in Jackson. It is a striking tribute to the honesty of Powers that he lived and died a comparatively poor man.[4]

As has been remarked, the ignorant freedman, drunk with the consciousness of freedom and led astray by designing political agitators, seemed to think that it was un-Republican not to organize into loyal leagues and other clubs and march over the county. Generally they

[4] Thomas Gillespie is authority for information as to the building of the spur line of the Mobile and Ohio to Starkville.

were in a state of unrest, like sheep without a shepherd—all looking eagerly for that supposedly promised gift of forty acres and a mule to each head of a family. In their excited and unsettled condition they reverted to the savage customs of their African ancestors, who had been trained to rally to some central point when the sound of their rude war drums was heard over hill and jungle. This was to them what the fiery cross was to the Gael or the beacon fire to the Saxon or North American Indian. Late at night the children of the Southern planters shivered with a nameless dread as the throbbing drums announced to them that the negroes were assembling and marching, they knew not why nor where.

When the negroes were becoming very insolent and unruly Dr. Ellis, of the Trim Cane neighborhood in Oktibbeha county, a United States Commissioner, issued a warrant for the arrest of a negro, Gabe Dotson, who had been guilty of some misdemeanor. This warrant was served by Bob Ellis, a nephew of Dr. Ellis, who was at that time clerking for Mr. Hub Sanders. Robert Ellis made the arrest and immediately the whole league or the organized body of negroes in that community armed themselves and marched into Starkville. They had been organized and drilled by Bob McDuffie, a negro who it was said had picked up some crude ideas of military science from service as body servant of his master in the Confederate army. As they marched up the main street of Starkville their guns were carried in a wagon in the midst of the column and were covered with corn shucks and thus concealed. Robert Ellis, who in the discharge of his duty had arrested their compatriot, was the main object of their search. When they reached the vicinity of the present courthouse in Starkville one of their number, named Samson Wynn, espying Ellis on the street, approached him and began to curse him. Ellis immediately shot him down. Bob McDuffie, the negro with the drum, seeing this, struck it and immediately the negroes rushed for their guns and began to fall in line returning the fire and shooting down Ellis. By this time all the white men on the street were rushing for their guns and the negroes were firing on them. A general and bloody battle, in which the negroes would have been exterminated, seemed imminent. Sheriff Powers, hearing the firing, rushed out of his office about the time that the drum signal to begin firing was given. The negroes in their excitement not knowing difference between a white Republican and any other white

man, he was shot in the neck with duck shot and quite painfully wounded. Robert Ellis, who was seriously but not mortally wounded, came limping painfully to the door of Mr. Hub Sanders' store and Sanders let him in. The negroes, armed and organized, had possession of Main street for a time. Capt. Hub Sanders and all the white men in town had rushed for their guns, however, and were preparing for an organized attack which the negroes could not have withstood. Knowing what was in preparation, Col. H. L. Muldrow rushed out among the negroes and urged them to disband at once and return to their homes and thus avoid further bloodshed.[5]

Afraid of the white man's anger and demoralized no doubt by the fact that they had shot Powers, the negroes hearkened to this wise advice and scattered to their homes. They were not to escape so easily, however. A night or two later a posse, including fifty or seventy-five men from Clay county, went to out arrest the ring leaders. Among others, Gabe Dotson's house was visited. The desperate negro shot at them from his cabin and one Ab. Ramey of West Point was wounded. After the shooting the negro ran for his life, but must have been overtaken, as he was never heard of again.

Learning a lesson from this riot, Powers had guards placed around the town to prevent any more negro bands from marching into it.

From 1866 to 1871, at which latter date the Ku Klux began to get in its work, were the halcyon days of negro and carpetbag rule in Oktibbeha county. Owing to the strictness of the test oaths and to the fact that many Democrats had either failed to register or had lost their registration certificates, there was at one time during this period a majority of eight hundred negro and Republican voters in the county. At this time, the whites were also intimidated by the power of the United States government behind the carpetbagger. They had not yet learned how to keep the negro from the polls or how to "cancel" his vote after he had been there. The negroes organized and marched in solid column to the polls on election days. At one time they wore yellow shirts, that is as far as they were able to do so, as a sort of uniform or badge of organization. At another time they appeared, each with an ear of corn suspended from the neck. In

[5] Mr. Hub Sanders, Confederate soldier, Ku Kluxer and sheriff of Oktibbeha county for sixteen years, is the source of information as to the riot.

this palmy time of the negro and carpetbagger in old Oktibbeha an old negro named Dave Higgins made a speech to his fellow Ethiops in the course of which he admonished them after this fashion "You niggers quit 'busing the white folks, for some white folks is as good as niggers."

During this period many negroes were elected to office in Oktibbeha county. Ben Chiles, already mentioned in connection with Colonel Muldrow, was in the legislature as were also Randall Nettles, Caesar Simmons, and Anderson Boyd. All these "legislators" have long since passed away with the exception of Ben Chiles and Randall Nettles. For years Ben was a well known character on the Starkville streets and has only recently died. When joked by the young white men with reference to his career in the legislature he would retort "Honey that sho is one place where you can never go"—or words to that effect.

Caesar Hyde, John Gamble, and Juniper Yeates were at various times members of the board of supervisors. A negro named Jim McNichols held at one time the office in which there were surely great opportunities for "emolument"—that of county treasurer. As we find no record of his having become rich, he must have been like the rest of them, a mere catspaw for the white men who were wielding the real power.

Ignorance and corruption could not long hold sway over the Anglo-Saxon, and the white man soon began to come into his own. In no uncertain tones the voices of the real rulers of the county were heard. Rendered desperate by such unspeakable conditions the native white people determined that by fair means or foul a check should be placed on negro and carpetbag misrule. Soon ballot stuffing, open intimidation, and bribery of negro voters at the polls were resorted to. Here if at any period in the world's history, the end justified the means. What was this end? I answer "The preservation of white supremacy and the keeping intact of the heritage of the fathers." Yes, the ballot boxes in Oktibbeha county were stuffed and, as Mr. Page an old member of the Ku Klux and war horse of Democracy remarked, "They were stuffed with mighty good stuffin." As few of the negroes could read, the clerk of the election was usually a Democrat. A favorite method of "carrying elections" in Oktibbeha was for the clerk of the election to memorize the entire list of names and offices on the

Democratic ticket and then read the Republican ballots as if they were Democratic.

An amusing story is told in this connection of an old negro preacher who was one of the clerks of an election. Determined to carry the election for white supremacy the Demorats made him drunk. One Hale, a Republican candidate, stood uneasily by while the stuffing went merrily on and his political doom was being writ. Ever and anon he would punch the sleeping negro, saying in an anxious tone, "Wake up parson!" After a time seeing the utter futility of further anxiety or effort he exclaimed "Pshaw! Pshaw!" and departed. Just about this time the drunken negro opened his eyes and looked all around and said "Do you tink anyting has gone wrong?" No, nothing had gone wrong, but that particular box had gone right!

Sometimes more strenuous measures than ballot box stuffing and moral suasion were resorted to in Oktibbeha. The doctrine of the Jesuits was pressed to its limits even to the extreme of physical violence as a punishment for bad faith. In their loyal leagues the negroes had been taught to give acquiescence to their former masters and pretend to vote the Democratic ticket, but in reality to vote the Republican.

Upon one occassion an election hung in the balance and much depended upon the result, the Democrats armed and desperate, stood around the polls and even snatched the ballots from the hands of negroes and intimidated them in various other ways.

On one occasion Rhett Maxwell had secured a negro's promise that he would vote the Democratic ticket. As the negro went in to vote Captain McDowell, who was standing near by, said to Maxwell "Watch that negro, he is going to vote the Republican ticket." Maxwell knew that the negro had the Democratic ticket in his right hand, but when he came to vote he voted the Republican ticket, which was in his left. So incensed was Captain McDowell at this breach of faith that when the negro came out he struck him a heavy blow with his fist, knocking him down. Captain McDowell and Mr. Maxwell are men of the highest probity and honor, the former being a Presbyterian elder and the latter a prominent Baptist. Both say that in defence of white supremacy, their families, and all that is dear to them they would act the same way, if placed again in similar circumstances. Theirs was the spirit of Virginius who slew his daughter

rather than see her dishonored. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies.

All of this course, was wrong in principle and proved a fruitful source of moral obliquity. Some men, who stuffed the ballot boxes when it seemed necessary, had their moral faculties so blunted that after a time they stuffed them when there was no real necessity.

As soon as these measures of expediency ceased to be called for in the closing of the imminent deadly breach through which the hosts of carpetbag misrule were rushing to prey upon the defenseless South —their use was discouraged by the Southern leaders. Gen. J. Z. George early sounded the note of warning against the use of such methods. He early saw the creeping miasma of moral obliquity and advised the Southern white man to turn aside from such methods; to get guns and of necessary stand at the polls and use open violence rather than fraud.

The Ku Klux Klan was organized in Starkville in about 1868. The best men of the county were in it. Colonel Muldrow, than whom no man was more loved and honored, was grand cyclops—chief organizer and head of the Klan. Other prominent members were Messrs. Gay, Page, Carothers, Rhett, Murray, Maxwell, Thomas and George Gillespie, Hub Sanders, and Henry Fox. Their usual meeting place was in a grove near George Gillespie's house about a quarter of a mile from the town of Starkville. The Klan adopted and carried out only preventive and remedial measures in Oktibbeha county. They were particularly active about election times frightening and, sometimes as an extreme measure, whipping unruly negroes. Though some irresponsible parties masqueraded as Ku Klux and ran to "an excess of riot," it is the proud and truthful boast of the regular organization in the county of Oktibbeha that at no time were their hands stained with human blood. They rode in nondescript costumes designed by themselves. Usually their only disguise were sheets draped about their persons.[6]

The negroes were not always as badly deceived as they appeared. An old negro named Johnson Gillespie, who had belonged to Dr. W. E. Gillespie of Starkville, said to his young master, "Marse George,

[6] Sources of information as to Ku Klux Klan were Messrs. George Gillespie Hub Sanders, and Murray Maxwell.

what are these things that go around at night called Ku Klux?" George Gillespie answered "I do not know, but they say they are the spirits of the dead." The old negro answered "If dey are the sperrits of de just who went to heaben I don't tink dey would want to come back to this country, and if dey are the sperrits of the wicked it is a —— poor hell that will not hold them."

The most picturesque and interesting character among the carpet-baggers of Oktibbeha was one McLaughlin. He had zeal, but not according to knowledge, and the fanaticism if not the courage of old John Brown. He had been a presiding elder in the Northern Methodist church, and when he came South he assisted in the organization of the negro Methodist church and accepted the same position in its economy. Soon after his arrival in Starkville he became the head of the freedman's bureau. He was also an organizer of loyal leagues, chief fomenter of political unrest, and an encourager of social equality. At the freedman's bureau headquarters near the present courthouse in Starkville he established a sort of coöperative store or stock company. Stock was $5 per share and corn or other produce was accepted in lieu of money. A negro's credit was in proportion to the number of shares he held. As McLaughlin lived at the store on terms of social equality with the negroes, it naturally became a negro headquarters. Encouraged by him the negroes became more and more insolent every day. White men and women were crowded into the gutters by the marching negroes. It was about this time that as a consequence of the Ellis riot Captain McCright was appointed by Sheriff Powers to guard the town.

Conditions finally became so unbearable that thirty or forty men from the western part of the county organized to come in and as they expressed it either "get" McLaughlin or drive him away. Some of these men were in the regular Ku Klux organization and some were not. The night this party started for Starkvilee Hub Sanders, a resident, had ridden out to collect a party to guard the town. When some distance out, some shots were fired as a Ku Klux signal in the distance. Sanders and his men then turned back and met the other party who were going in after McLaughlin. Sanders advised them not to go as Captain McCright, an old Confederate soldier, was on guard and would defend McLaughlin to the death. Part of the party under George Gillespie went on anyway, Sanders refusing to go with

them. Leaving the main road and thus eluding the guard they came around through the section now known as Hard Scrabble to McLaughlin's store. McLaughlin and the negroes with him in fear of some such raid had piled up three or four hundred bushels of corn against the door. The party secured a long pole and using it as a battering ram drove the door from its hinges; McLaughlin and the negroes with him meanwhile crying murder at the top of their voices. Aroused by the clamor the town guard under McCright came up and drove the party away. The reputable element among the Ku Klux only wanted to frighten McLaughlin and drive him away, but there were those in the party who would have killed him.[7] McLaughlin, who had been warned before and had refused to go, was glad enough to leave this time. W. B. Montgomery, a prominent citizen, acted as go-between and arranged that McLaughlin should depart the next day. Strange to relate under the principle that you must fight the devil with fire McLaughlin asked that "Devil Jim Bell" a local fire eater be selected to guard him on the way to the railroad station. While W. B. Montgomery was in consultation with McLaughlin at the freedmen's bureau headquarters as to ways and means of escape a party came and offered their services as a "guard" for McLaughlin to Mayhew, twelve miles away. Montgomery fortunately called to mind the spirit of the old adage "Beware of the Greeks bearing gifts" and after looking them over decided that McLaughlin would never get to Mayhew with them, alive. So with the connivance of Montgomery, who was determined to avoid bloodshed, McLaughlin was dressed in a woman's clothes and slipped out through Hard Scrabble to the nearest railroad station and finally landed safely in Holly Springs. Breathing forth threatenings and slaughter, he was back in a few days with United States marshals and a troop of cavalry at his back.

There were three separate dens of Ku Klux in Oktibbeha county. One had its headquarters at Starkville, another at the Choctaw agency in the country and the third and last at Double Springs. Men from all three dens had participated to a greater or less extent in the harrying of McLaughlin. All of them had united in the determination

[7] My sources of information on McLaughlin were Professor Maxwell, Hub Sanders and George Gillespie.

to drive him from the country. The negroes, not at all times so badly scared and deceived as had been supposed, had penetrated the disguises of many of the Ku Klux and lodged information against them. McLaughlin's special animosity seemed to be directed against Jim Bell, the man whose services as guardian he had requested. Bell sat in the streets and shouted "Hello Yanks" to the troops as they went directly towards his house and then, hearing they were after him, fled. The troops burst into Bell's house and surprised his wife and sister-in-law in their night clothes. Trusting to the aforementioned negro sources of information McLaughlin had every man arrested and indicted whom he thought had had anything to do with his hurried exodus. So unreliable was his information, however, that he failed to have arrested a single man who had been an active participant. Many of the leading Ku Klux, however, were caught in the drag net and carried to Holly Springs. While the arrests were being made the soldiers were quartered for a night or two in the courthouse in Starkville. The conduct of the soldiers in breaking into Jim Bell's house had so aroused the county that a party of thirty men made up at Steele's mill near Starkville were in full march to attack the soldiers when the counsel of older and wiser heads prevailed and they yielded to the entreaties of Captain Beattie and Rogers and Judge Hopkins.

Rhett Maxwell, Murray Maxwell, Y. Z. Harrington, Jim Watt, Wiley Moss, William Bell, Col. Graves, Aleck Hogan, John Yeates, and others, to the number of twenty-six, were arrested. These arrests, of course, created intense excitement. Some of the more desperate spirits meditated a cross country expedition for the purpose of disposing finally of McLaughlin, who was teaching a negro school in Holly Springs. The counsel of wiser heads again prevailed. The committal trial was held at Holly Springs. No trouble was had in securing bond for the accused, as bondsmen went up from Starkville and the most prominent citizens of Marshall county vied with each other in the effort to sign the bail bonds.

The accused men were arraigned before Judge R. A. Hill at Oxford at the next succeeding term of the Federal court. Judge Hill, a very fair and impartial judge, showed his sympathy for the accused men, but there is no doubt that as Ku Klux they came very near making a trip to the Federal prison at Albany. In this time of need Powers,

the Republican leader in Oktibbeha county, showed himself the white man's friend. He used his influence with those in authority and declared that not a man who was under arrest in Oxford had been concerned in the raid on McLaughlin's store. This assurance, coming from such a source, had great effect. The prosecuting attorney of the Federal court in session at Oxford was a carpetbagger named G. Wiley Wells. Many of those on trial were old soldiers. Armed and absolutely fearless, they were ready for any desperate enterprise. At one time they seriously considered attacking and chaining up G. Wiley Wells and the trial judge and all Republican officials and escaping across the country to Texas. In a spirit of desperate bravado they would shout G. Wiley Wells after the fashion of a court crier at all hours of the night. One night all the accused, draping themselves in sheets, participated in a mock Ku Klux parade to the room occupied by G. Wiley Wells. Knocking on the door they cried in stentorian tones for G. Wiley Wells to come out and view them. Needless to say he did not emerge. Really intimidated—knowing the nature of the men with whom he was dealing and realizing that they represented the real voice of the people—Wells and other Republican Federal court officials had the cases postponed, and they never came up again for trial. Soon after the postponenent F. S. Pate, a Republican lawyer of Oktibbeha county made the proposition that he would extricate all from the trouble who would pay him $100. George Gillespie and Hub Sanders had been arrested and arraigned in Starkville, but had not been carried to Oxford with the others. Nevertheless they were very uneasy. Gillespie, who was at the time a man of means, states that when he heard that something was in the air and that there was a possible way of escape, he took the Mobile and Ohio train and rode it continuously for a time from Corinth to Meridian "looking for the hole." He finally found it, and paid for himself and a friend Drake and several others. Sanders and all of the others who could raise the money also paid. They had a wholesome respect acquired in the war for the United States government and wished to be very certain that this matter would never come up again. F. S. Pate, the Republican lawyer who opened the way of escape, was a native of Lowndes county, Mississippi. He secured the appointment as chancellor in the Oktibbeha district and held it until the overthrow of the carpetbag régime.

McLaughlin, who was a poor sort of creature at best, went to St. Louis from Holly Springs and became assistant to the district attorney. He seems to have suffered a partial change of heart. Some five or six years ago he visited Starkville. Some one saw him on the street and pointing him out to Professor Maxwell said "There is your friend," Maxwell then said to him "Hello there, do you know who I am?" "You are Mr. Maxwell" replied McLaughlin. "Didn't you swear lies on me at Holly Springs" said Maxwell. "I was mistaken" humbly replied McLaughlin.

Any low vagabond and camp follower from the North who was willing to affiliate with the negroes was able to make a political tool of them at this time. Contemporary with McLaughlin in Oktibbeha county was one McBride, who had been whipped out of Chickasaw county where he had taught a negro school. Becoming the teacher of a negro school at Osborn, he was found guilty of rape committed on one of his pupils and forced to leave the country. One Leak, a carpetbagger also taught a negro school in the county and was at one time president of the board of supervisors. He was whipped on the streets of Starkville by Thomas Gillespie for writing an insulting note to Gillespie's sister when she asked him to pay a just debt. He died of pneumonia in Starkville not long after he received this thrashing.

Another low vagabond was "Shirt" Wilson, so-called because he was tried for the theft of a shirt from the negro with whom he was living. Though making a speech in his own defense he was convicted and jailed, but falling over in a fit he was released and permitted to leave the county.

The man who gave the most trouble in the county and held the negro vote together the longest were not these low characters, but men of good family and reputation, many of them natives of the county, who became Republicans after the war for the spoils of office. W. E. Saunders, the two Sullivans, Woodward, Hale, and F. S. Pate were men of this type.

In the early seventies the Democratic political organizations of the county made it a point to intimidate and if necessary whip the leaders of the negro drum companies and break up the meetings of these organizations. If possible the drums were always secured and destroyed and threats made of more drastic treatment if any further

meeting, marching or drumming was attempted. These measures of expediency were not always carried through without bloodshed.

Before a political speaking at the Choctaw agency, the democratic organization arranged to have signals given with horns if trouble should arise. The negroes marched to the speaking in solid phalanx with drum beating. This proving very offensive to the Democrats, an agreement was made between the parties that both horn blowing and drum beating should cease, after which both parties dispersed. On his way home from the speaking young Sessums met a negro named Todd Hudgins, carrying an arm full of guns toward Chapel Hill, a negro church which was a favorite assembling ground of the negroes. Sessums asked Hudgins what he was going to do with so many guns so late in the evening, the negro answered "We are going to kill every woman and child in this beat tonight. Our club meets at Chapel Hill and I am carrying the guns to them." This was all that was necessary to make young Sessums resolve on desperate measures. Ascending a high hill, he sounded the notes of alarm upon his horn. As soon as they could secure their guns all the able-bodied white Democrats answered his signal by joining him near Chapel Hill. Marching in company formation, under the leadership of Thomas Peters, they advanced at once on the negro church. As they rounded a bend in the road near the church the negroes, who had already assembled, fired on them. The whites at once returned the fire, killing one negro outright and wounding about thirty, some of whom afterwards died. The negroes scattered like sheep at the first fire, the white men holding the field and getting possession of the guns. The ringleaders in the disturbance were arrested by H. C. Powers, the Republican sheriff, and sent to Washington to testify before the Congressional committee. With them was sent Henry Outlaw, the negro leader. They were acquitted, Outlaw himself swearing that the negroes were at fault. An interesting sidelight on his testimony is furnished by the fact that the Democrats told Henry on the way up that he would never see Mississippi again if he did not tell the truth.

No man was ever loved more by the people of Starkville than Col. H. L. Muldrow, who was familiarly called by his friends the little giant of Oktibbeha county. He it was who with the connivance of Powers was sent to the Mississippi legislature to act as a check upon

the ignorant negroes in that body. He it was who in 1868 as grand cyclops became the chief organizer of the Ku Klux Klan in the Masonic building in Starkville. He it was who with his law partner, General Nash, was counsel for the accused men of Oktibbeha in Oxford who were suffering from a persecution rather a prosecution. Years after, when an attempt was being made to defeat him for some public office, one of the men whom he had defended told of how on one occasion when the case seemed to be going against them and a term in Federal prison stared them in the face, Muldrow followed the accused to their rooms and told them almost with tears that he was one with them and would be beaten with the same stripes with which they were afflicted.

Colonel Muldrow's triumphant canvass for Congress in 1875, when the white man had begun to come again into his own, was the occasion of one of the most exciting incidents of the Reconstruction period. There was to be a joint discussion at the fair grounds in Starkville between Muldrow and Finis H. Little, the Republican candidate, with whom were his lieutenants, Lee and Frazee. The negro Republican organizations of Oktibbeha having assembled the rank and file of their membership to the number of about twelve or fifteen hundred at "I John Church," upon the site of which the present dairy barn of the Agricultural and Mechanical College now stands, announced that they intended to march to the speaking in solid column through the streets of Starkville. The whites had had enough of negro marching and drumming, and determined to resist any such demonstration to the death. In pursuance of this resolution a body of men much inferior in numbers to the negroes, but officered by old soldiers and sufficient to have exterminated them, was assembled in the streets of Starkville. Colonel Doss, the last colonel of the 14th Mississippi, and Captain McDowell of Starkville were in command. The negroes had been warned not to attempt the march. Rhett Maxwell, now Professor Maxwell of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, had said to a negro leader, one De Loache "You shall not march." De Loache had answered "We will." Maxwell then told him to go to a certain store and buy the finest suit of clothes on sale there. This was to be his if he marched. The implication was that he would only need it for his coffin. So answered King Harold, Harald Hardrada, King of

Norway when he told him that he could have only six feet by two of English ground.[8]

The little force of white men in Starkville had been reinforced from West Point by Albert Cottrell and others who brought a cannon with them. When the news came that the negroes in the face of all warning had said that they would march through Starkville streets, if they had to wade through blood, plans of battle were quickly formed. The Starkville cannon under Captain Hub Sanders and the cannon from West Point under Captain Cottrell were loaded to the muzzle with buckshot and scrapiron and planted on an elevation commanding the street up which the negroes were to march. After the first discharge the negroes were to be charged in front and flank by the force under Colonel Doss and Captain McDowell.

When the pickets who had been sent out returned and reported that the negro column was actually in motion all was expectancy, excitement, and grim determination. The younger element particularly were spoiling for the fray and could hardly be restrained by their leaders. The negroes marched in solid formation, the drum beating at their head. Their guns were carried in wagons in the midst of the column. When the head of the column reached a point near where the Baptist church now is, Captains Sessums and Beattie of the Democratic executive committee, wishing to avoid if possible a useless slaughter, suggested that it would be a good idea to go and stop them. Acting upon this suggestion Captain McDowell, saying that he would not ask any man to do what what he would not do himself, rode forth alone and reined up his horse directly in front of the advancing column of negroes.

The old Confederate soldier showed himself a Horatius indeed that day; for who could tell what these semi-barbarians would do? In order to succor Captain McDowell in case of an attack, Godfrey, a Louisianian, rode up close behind him. Rhett Maxwell and Jim Gunn and Jim Bell also sat on their horses near by. Paying little attention to McDowell, the negroes came on. The negro with the drum was beating it violently at the head of the column. Captain McDowell

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[8] These facts were obtained from Hub Sanders, Professor Maxwell, and Captain McDowell.

was forced by them to back his horse for a considerable distance. Finally a negro leveled a derringer at the Captain as he commanded them to disperse and go back. Immediately the Captain covered him with his pistol and the negro instead of firing fell flat on the ground. The Captain's horse having backed upon a small bridge that spanned a ditch at that point in the road, the negro with the drum ran forward beating it violently. His object was to frighten the horse and force the Captain off the bridge. Then he would no doubt have been set upon and clubbed before his friends could have reached him. The old soldier was equal to the situation. Having already "floored" the negro with the derringer he now leveled his pistol at the drummer with the stern command "Strike that drum again and I'll kill you." At this juncture an old negro about seventy-five years old rushed up to the head of the column and shouted, "Beat that drum; I am as ready to die now as any time." Keeping the drummer covered McDowell answered, "Well, old man, you will die if he beats it." Needless to say there was no more drumming just then. The old soldier's heroism had saved the situation. Overawed by the coolness and determination of McDowell and those who had ridden up to his support the negroes wavered and halted. By mere moral suasion and force of will and dauntless bravery in the face of odds the Anglo Saxon was triumphant. The sight of the two cannons on the hill had also done much toward creating a healthy sentiment in favor of retreat. Capt. Hub Sanders was sitting by his cannon calmly smoking. A negro, Bob Bell, gazing with distended eyes, exclaimed that he could stand one bullet but not a sack full.

After McDowell had ridden off and while the negroes were still standing irresolute, Capt. W. H. Chiles walked up and beckoning to the yellow negro drummer said, "Come with me." As they started off a negro in the column cried, "Don't go with that white man." At this Chiles turned and drawing his pistol walked into the column asking to be shown the negro who had spoken. Taking the negro drummer up the street a short distance, he showed him stacked away in a store one hundred and seventy-five guns—and said impressively "Beat that drum again and we'll kill you." The negro answered, "Boss, I don't believe I will beat it any more." Hearing of the attempted march of the negroes and knowing that cannon had been planted in the road ahead to stop them, Judge Orr of Columbus, a prominent Republican, rode up to the head of their column and told

them that the white men were in a temper to exterminate them if they attempted to proceed. H. C. Powers, the Republican sheriff, also entered their ranks and implored them to turn back. After lingering sullenly in the road for a time they gave heed to this advice and dispersed.

The Democratic secret political organization, known as "Square Robinson," initiated members in Oktibbeha county about 1872. Their method of salutation was "Have you seen Robinson?" The reply to this was "What Robinson?" To this the first speaker answered "Square Robinson." Murray Maxwell, George Gillespie, Hub Sanders, and Glenn Bell were members. This organization was formed for the purpose of controlling the elections and seeing to it that, whether by fair or questionable means, they went Democratic.

The Red Shirts also had their day in Oktibbeha county. There was nothing secret about this movement. The man who wore a red shirt simply proclaimed to the world the fact that a Democratic heart beat beneath it. The Red Shirts were very much in evidence around the polls on election days. A negro named Graham Spencer said to J. W. Rousseau, "What do all these red shirts mean? I know what they mean—they mean blood. If the white folks wants blood they can get it." At this point in his remarks Rousseau struck him over the head with a hickory stick, knocking him down. Getting up in a half-dazed condition he started down the road and met a negro named Nelson Thompson. "What is the matter," asked the negro, "Mr. Rousseau is up there trying to start up a riot," replied Spencer. This blow seems to have started Spencer in the right direction for he lost interest in politics and began to preach the gospel soon after.

The history of Oktibbeha is to a large extent the history of the other counties of the State. Immediately after the war the men of Mississippi were too much dazed and broken in spirit to effectively attempt to cheat of their prey the hordes of carpetbag vultures who poured in upon them—for it was not the eagle that preyed upon the vitals of the bound Prometheus, but the vulture. After a time, rising from lethargy and despair, the manhood of the State began to assert itself. Bound hand and foot and unable to adopt open and legitimate methods, history repeated itself, and they took the way of an oath-bound secret organization—the Ku Klux Klan. Well says Garner,[9]

[9] *History of Reconstruction in Mississippi*, 353.

"History abounds with illustrations of the truth that the secret conclave, the league and the conspiracy are the sequences of political proscription and disfranchisement. The Illumines in France, the Tugenbund in Germany, the Carbonari in Italy, and Nihilism in Russia are notable examples. In the Southern States opposition to the Congressional policy of reconstruction did not take the form of armed and organized resistance, but of secret retaliation upon its agents, and especially favored beneficiaries regardless of race, color, or nativity."

Square Robinson and the Red Shirt movement is Mississippi were simply designed to perpetuate and establish what the Ku Klux movement had so well begun. Through these organizations the Democrats secured only a temporary control of the political situation. Then too, such methods were fruitful sources of moral obliquity and were therefore fraught with danger to the young manhood of the South. At best the snake was scotched, not killed; the negro vote was ever to be reckoned with; and as long as this entered as an element into the situation the question of white supremacy hung suspended like Mahomet's coffin between earth and heaven. The problem was how to give it a firm foundation and establish it forever. The Constitutional Convention of 1890 solved this problem in a satisfactory manner by formulating and attaching to the election laws of the State the educational qualification. Gen. J. Z. George, the formulator of this most important legislation, was most ably seconded in his efforts by Barksdale and other able and farseeing Mississippians. General George being an able constitutional lawyer, the Franchise legislations modeled after similar legislation which in the constitution of Northern states had been designed for the purpose of curbing the vote of the ignorant alien, easily stood the test of the Supreme Court of the United States. Similar legislation soon became a part of the fundamental law of all Southern States. Mississippians as pioneers had wrought a glorious work. A new era had dawned for the South. May such terrible dangers never confront the men of Mississippi and Oktibbeha county again, but if they should arise may we be given strength to meet and overcome them.

It is fitting that this paper should close with the words of Professor Maxwell, a beloved member of the faculty of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, a prominent Baptist and a man beloved all over the State. When asked by the writer whether he would act again as he had acted should similar conditions arise, he answered "Yes, I would do the same things now, only I would pray God's blessing upon me while doing them."

APPENDIX.—CENSUS STATISTICS OF OKTIBBEHA COUNTY, 1860-1880.

TABLE I. OWNERS OF SLAVES AND NUMBER OWNED IN 1860.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10-15	15-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-70	70-100	100-200	200-500	Total Owners	Total Slaves
77	39	44	40	30	24	25	21	26	60	48	55	21	11	13	10	5	.....	549	7,631

TABLE II. GENERAL POPULATION STATISTICS.

	WHITES			INDIANS	BLACKS			TOTAL POPULATION				
	Native	Foreign	Total		Free	Slaves	Total	Native	Foreign	Total	Total 21 and Upward	
											Male	Female
1860	5,301	27	5,328	.....	18	7,631	7,649	12,950	27	12,977	.....	.....
1870	.....	54	5,587	.....	.....	.....	9,304	14,837	54	14,891	2,945	2,146
1880	.....	48	5,109	1	.....	.....	10,869	15,930	.....	.....	3,105	.....

TABLE III. POPULATION OF MINOR CIVIL DISTRICTS, 1870-1880.

Precincts	1870			1880
	Total	White	Colored	Total
District 1. Starkville	3,160	959	2,201	4,105
Starkville	475	300	175	1,500
District 2. Siloam	3,347	1,206	2,641	3,506
District 3. Double Springs	1,996	1,466	530	1,871
District 4. Whitefield	1,728	1,169	559	2,161
District 5. Choctaw Agency	4,160	787	3,373	4,335

TABLE IV. NATIVITY OF POPULATION, 1870-1880.

	Native Born										Foreign Born									Total Population
	Mississippi	Alabama	South Carolina	Virginia and West Virginia	Tennessee	Georgia	North Carolina	Louisiana	Kentucky	Arkansas	Total Native	British America	England and Wales	Ireland	Scotland	Germany	France	Switzerland	Africa	Total Foreign	
1870	9,682	1,721	1,353	621	268	491	.....	.....	.....	.....	14,837	1	5	13	19	8	2	3	3	54	14,891
1880	12,318	1,225	958	444	188	216	426	27	31	13	15,930	1	1	17	10	15	1	.....	.....	48	15,978

TABLE V. AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS, 1860-1880.

	Improved Land, in Farms				Unimproved Land, in Farms		Farm Products									
	Number of Farms	Acres	Value, Including Land, Fences and Buildings	Value of Implements and Machinery	Cost of Fertilizers	Total Acres	Woodland and Forest, Acres	All Other, Acres	Acres in Cotton	Bales of Cotton	Acres in Corn	Bushels of Corn	Pounds of Tobacco	Acres in Oats	Bushels of Oats	Bushels of Wheat	Bushels of Sweet Potatoes	Bushels of Irish Potatoes	Bushels of Peas and Beans
1860	673	90,959	$3,352,453	$137,152	....	139,324	.....	.....	.....	19,959	.....	664,595	.....	.....	1,727	22,359	84,643	7,607	28,563
1870	1,113	84,662	1,063,880	95,806	....	.....	90,973	6,702	.....	6,288	.....	334,463	2,046	.....	9,454	5,198	23,627	2,915	1,306
1880	1,218	69,294	1,344,591	56,544	$440	111,503	89,343	22,160	29,679	9,929	25,257	395,553	.....	3,288	39,063	9,351	54,631	8,224	5,450

TABLE V. AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS—Continued.

	LIVE STOCK AND ITS PRODUCTIONS											MISCELLANEOUS					
	Horses	Asses and Mules	Milch Cows	Working Oxen	Other Cattle	Sheep	Swine	Value of Live Stock	Wool, Pounds of	Butter, Pounds of	Animals Slaughtered, Value of	Hay, Tons of	Value of Orchard Products	Value of Market Garden Products	Beeswax, Pounds of	Honey, Pounds of	Manufactures, Homemade, Value of
1860	1,735	2,178	3,182	1,414	6,461	5,025	31,585	820,655	9,490	129,435	181,220	.....	$18,875	$80	571	13,845	28,896
1870	1,237	1,705	2,296	521	3,356	2,105	14,555	482,037	3,763	48,787	232,248	1,329	9,677	.....	256	3,885	7,473
1880	1,324	2,092	3,545	791	4,389	2,411	15,955	399,881	8,047*	206,392†	.....	268	2,935	100	344	4,492	.....

* Spring clip of 1880. † Made on farms in 1879.

TABLE VI. NUMBER, SIZE AND TENURE OF FARMS, 1860-1880.

Size of Farms	1860	1870	1880	TENURE IN 1880		
				Rented for Share of Crop	Rented for Fixed Money Rent	Cultivated by Owner
3 to 10 acres	4	35	27	3	16	8
10 to 20 acres	65	200	84	28	37	19
20 to 50 acres	200	401	256	54	147	55
50 to 100 acres	140	265	299	21	93	185
100 to 500 acres	231	186	498	12	122	364
500 to 1000 acres	23	20	42	1	2	39
1000 acres and over	610	6	12	.....	.....	12
Total number	673	1,113	1,218	119	417	682

TABLE VII. GENERAL MANUFACTURING STATISTICS,* 1860–1880.

	Establishments	Capital Invested	Cost of Raw Materials	Hands Employed		Annual Cost of Labor	Annual Value of Products
				Male	Female		
1860	48	$118,928	$211,290	1	1	$34,620	$217,650
1870	32	30,135	44,517	76		6,303	71,059
1880	15	88,000	43,010	124	1	25,062	81,929

* These statistics embrace the entire manufacturing and mechanical productions of the county, including "neighborhood industries."

TABLE VIII. SELECTED MANUFACTURING STATISTICS, 1860–1880.

	Kinds of Establishments	Number	Capital Invested	Cost of Raw Material	Number of Hands Employed		Annual Cost of Labor	Annual Value of Products
					Male	Female		
1860	Agricultural Implements	6	$7,850	$5,860	14		$5,400	$18,950
	Blacksmithing	4	5,200	1,275	9		2,400	4,570
	Boots and Shoes	8	8,750	5,800	13		4,140	13,350
	Carriages	1	5,000	2,700	6		1,800	5,850
	Clothing	1	300	300	2		480	1,000
	Flour and Meal	6	51,500	164,750	11		2,700	74,750
	Furniture, cabinet	4	2,200	1,100	7		1,980	4,340
	Leather	3	6,000	4,300	6		2,040	7,750
	Lumber, sawed	6	25,500	22,900	29		7,200	75,500
	Printing	2	2,000	750	6	1	3,840	6,000
	Saddlery and Harness	3	1,600	1,020	4		1,260	3,020
	Wagons, Carts, etc	4	3,025	560	5		1,380	2,570
1870*								
1880†								
	Total	48	118,925	211,290	112	1	34,620	217,650

* All industries with a gross annual production of less than $10,000, all "neighbothood industries," and saw mills producing less than $2,500 annually, are omitted.

† All counties having a gross production of less than $20,000 annually, all "neighborhood industries," and all other industries producing less than $20,000 annually were omitted in 1880.

Table IX. Church Statistics, 1860–1870.

	Baptist			Methodist			Presbyterian			Presbyterian (Cumberland)			Total			
	Number	Sittings	Value of Property	Number	Sittings	Value of Property	Number	Sittings	Value of Property	Number	Sittings	Value of Property	Number	Edifices	Sittings	Value of Property
1860	13	4,400	13,925	11	3,400	15,075	5	1,450	11,700	2	600	1,700	31	.....	9,850	42,400
1870	15	3,750	.....	13	3,350	.....	11*	2,750	.....	.....	.....	.....	39	39	9,850	53,800

* No separate report for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1870.

Table X. School Statistics, 1870.

	Attended School					Cannot Read, 10 and over	Cannot Write												Total
		White		Colored			White						Colored						
							10 and under 15		15 and under 21		21 and over		10 and under 15		15 and under 21		21 and over		
	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1870	679	273	260	69	77	5,558	117	103	118	59	161	254	373	338	434	586	1,654	1,723	5,920

TABLE XI. TAXES AND PUBLIC DEBTS, 1860-1880.

	Assessed Valuation			Taxation				Public Debt				Total Public Debt
								County		City, Town, etc.		
	Real Estate	Personal Property	Total	State	County	City, Town, etc.	Total	Bonded	All Other	Bonded	All Other	
1860	4,394,785	11,002,700	15,397,485	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1870	1,229,112	665,052	1,894,164	14,046	37,884	.....	51,930	.....	5,000	.....	.....	5,000
1880	885,754	343,126	1,228,880	6,746	21,299	1,500	.....	35,000	.....	7,600	.....	42,600

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